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Issue 96 • Summer 2005



News about BLM-managed public lands in Alaska

BLM closing Tok office

BLM-Alaska will close its Fortymile Field Station in Tok in mid-August when the existing lease expires. "The decision was made after careful consideration of existing and future BLM workload and budget projections, public comments from Tok residents, and the availability of BLM facilities in other communities," said Fairbanks District Manager Bob Schneider.

Most of the public lands and resources managed by BLM in the Fortymile River area are closer to Chicken and Eagle than to Tok. BLM will retain its seasonal facilities in Chicken for the benefit of tourists along the Taylor Highway and miners working in the Fortymile Mining District. BLM visitor information will continue to be provided at the Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Tok.

Three employees currently living and working in Tok have been reassigned to Fairbanks where they will continue to serve the needs of the Fortymile River area but will be available for other work assignments as well. BLM's seasonal employee at Fort Egbert in Eagle is not affected by the change.

Inside . . .

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Summer + Alaska = Fish



Elijah Waters

It's June and the kings are running on the Gulkana River, but there's a lot more to learn about our featured summer recreation destination— it's got Growing Pains, our feature story on page 4.

Many BLM websites remain off line

Frequent Internet users know that many BLM websites are currently unavailable. In Alaska, people seeking information about pending land use plans, planning a trip, or trying to download land ownership information were among the first to notice the shutdown.

BLM voluntarily disconnected its sites April 8 following a series of planned security tests conducted independently by the Inspector General. The tests revealed potential weaknesses in the systems that need to be addressed and affects all sites except those related to fire and public

safety. "An extensive effort is now under way to gradually bring our sites back to full accessibility so users should periodically log in to see if their favorite site has been reactivated," said Associate State Director Julia Dougan.

Since the shutdown affects BLM nationally, it is hard to say when Alaska sites will be restored. "We are prepared to meet your information needs, but it just may take a little longer because we have to do it the old-fashioned way," said Dougan. Portions of www.blm.gov came online as this issue was published.

Alaska Invaded

Alaska is known worldwide for welcoming visitors, but there is one group we don't want anything to do with...

Noxious and invasive plants* have infested millions of acres in the lower 48 states, impacting agriculture, harming wildlife and livestock, and even altering the frequency of wildfires. Luckily, we don't have to worry about these troublesome plants here in our isolated corner of the continent. Right?

Wrong. Noxious and invasive plants not only pose a threat to Alaska, but they are already here. That fact was reinforced last August when Fairbanks District Office wildlife biologist Ruth Gronquist joined BLM's national weed scientist Hank McNeel and colleagues from the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service for a two-week plant survey along the Dalton Highway.

"We know these invasive species are out there, but few inventories have been done in Alaska, and those only in the last several years," says Gronquist.

This survey covered the Dalton Highway from the Yukon River to Galbraith Lake, in the northern foothills of the Brooks Range. The researchers established transects every five miles and at every sixth pullout along the highway. At each transect, they recorded all invasive species and measured the percent cover of these plants.

Virtually all the sites had some kind of invasive species, some of them being extremely common plants like pineapple weed and common dandelion.

"You see these plants in your yards, in your gardens, but it's a shame to see them up the Dalton," says Gronquist. A shame, she

explains, because noxious and invasive weeds reduce growing space for native species and because they can cause problems for wildlife.

Some of the team's discoveries were more unexpected than dandelions ... and more worrisome. At the Arctic Circle Wayside the researchers found yellow toadflax and yellow hawkbeard, two particularly aggressive plants.

Yellow toadflax, also known as butter'n'eggs, is a Eurasian plant originally introduced to North America as an ornamental plant. Unlike the more common invasive plants the team found, the yellow toadflax seemingly appeared out of nowhere. "There wasn't a seed source nearby," says Gronquist. "You come to the Arctic Circle and there it is."

It's impossible to tell how the plants were introduced to the Dalton but Gronquist has her suspicions. Seed mixes used along the highway to reseed disturbed areas may have been contaminated with unwanted seeds. Or the plants' seeds may have traveled the way so many invasive species do — on shoes, clothing, tires, pets, or OHVs.

(right) **Data from Dalton Highway transects indicates weeds are moving along travel corridors in the Arctic.**

*An invasive species is defined as a species that is non-native to the ecosystem and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Noxious weeds are those species which, once established, become destructive and difficult to control.



Ruth Gronquist



Donna Gindie

Data from the inventory will be used to develop invasive species management plans, including recommendations on how to hinder the spread of such plants in Alaska. Public education on how to recognize and eradicate these plants will be an important component of those plans.

McNeel continued on to Anchorage where he conducted training sessions about establishing a cooperative, integrated weed management area. The Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District is the lead agency with numerous federal, state, Alaska Native, military and corporate partners.

During a walk around a small portion of BLM's Campbell Tract, a popular 750-acre recreation site in the heart of Anchorage, employees learned the bad news. Dandelion, foxtail barley, white sweetclover, mayweed chamomile, yellow toadflax and different mustard species — all non-native invasive weed species — were freely growing in some areas.

Preventing invasive weed species from being introduced is the cheapest way to manage weeds, McNeel said. Critical to this effort is a well balanced education and awareness program along with early detection and eradication programs.

"Many weed or invasive species spread by both the creeping underground root system as well as by seed. They can spread 12 to 50 percent per year but on average, they'll spread 14 percent. That means that every five to seven years the size of infestation will double. If you let the weeds go to seed one year, you will have to watch that area for six to 13 years or more because of the seed viability."

Playing a major role in the public education effort is the Alaska's Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM), an informal group of individuals from agencies and organizations concerned about controlling noxious and invasive plant species in Alaska's interior.

For more information on CNIPM and noxious and invasive species in Alaska, visit CNIPM's web site at www.cnipm.org or BLM-Alaska's noxious weed page at www.ak.blm.gov/ak930/noxwds.html

—Craig McCaa and Donna Gindie

(left) **Weed scientist Hank McNeel had no trouble finding invaders such as this clover at Campbell Tract in the middle of Anchorage.**

Seven Ways You Can Help

1. **Learn** to identify noxious and invasive plants.
2. **Landscape** with native plants.
3. **Clean** your car and recreational vehicle including tire treads, hiking boots, running shoes, and other gear before entering native areas. Seeds and spores can hitchhike on muddy hiking boots, running shoes, backpacks, farm and garden equipment, boats and aircraft.
4. **Buy** certified weed-free forage and mulch. Dog mushing and guided horseback hunts have the potential of spreading noxious weed seed into remote areas via bedding and feed.
5. **Volunteer** to assist land managers in removing invasive plants and restoring native plant communities. Participate in local community weed pulls.
6. **Express** your concerns about the need to manage and control invasive species to your elected representatives and urge them to ensure that the state's quarantine and response programs are state-of-the-art.
7. **Share** this information with a friend!

For information on participating in or organizing a community weed pull, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service, your local Soil and Water Conservation District, or the National Park Service.

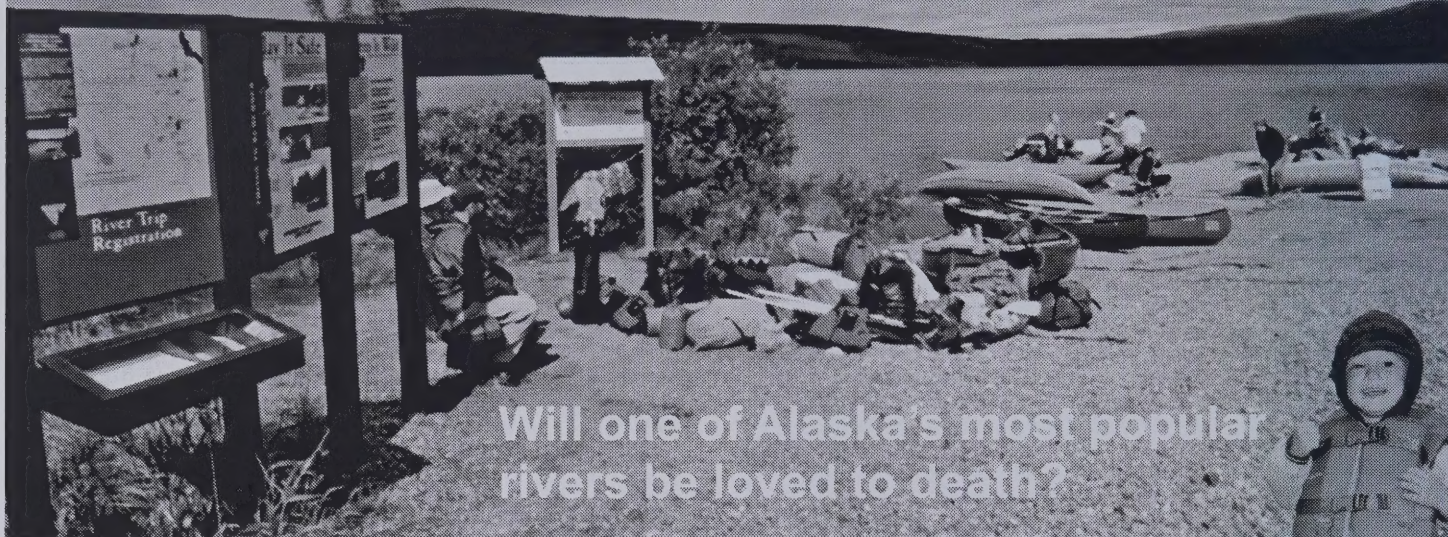
For other sites on what you can do to stop the spread of invasive species visit:

<http://www.cnipm.org/involved.html>

<http://www.invasivespecies.gov/community/whatyou.shtml>



Growing Pains



Will one of Alaska's most popular rivers be loved to death?

IT'S NO SECRET. Whether you live in Anchorage or Fairbanks you can get there in half a day. There's easy access to put-in and take-out points on the Richardson Highway. You can easily portage around the most challenging rapids. BLM has great campgrounds at Paxson Lake and Sourdough. There's plenty of moose and eagles to see. And when the kings are running, fish on!



More and more Alaskans and visitors have discovered the Gulkana River. In 1980, Congress designated the Gulkana's main stem from Paxson Lake to Sourdough, along with its Middle Fork and West Fork, as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Gulkana qualified based on its primitive character, abundant fish and wildlife and its geologic, cultural and recreational values. "Since then, use has trended upward. A low water year or a poor run of kings can knock down the visitation a bit, but overall, use is now more than triple what it was when our first management plan was completed in 1983," says BLM recreation planner Heath Emmons. "With Denali Park being overcrowded, there's a push to spend more money marketing the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve," says Suzanne McCarthy, owner of guiding outfit River Wrangellers, one of the 14 operators holding a commercial use permit for the river. "The Gulkana, being so close to this park, sits in the balance (middle). Without increased monitoring and management by BLM, the Gulkana

could be in jeopardy."

BLM's Glennallen District Office manages the upper main stem and the primary tributaries while the Ahtna Native Corp. manages shoreline uplands from Sourdough to the Copper River. Because the Gulkana is a navigable river, the State of Alaska manages between the ordinary high water marks of the river. Both users of the river and managers alike agree it's time for an updated management plan to maintain quality experiences along the river.

BLM launched studies in 1998 to help determine what river users felt was a quality experience. What is considered overcrowding? What are acceptable limits to the number of trails, campsites, litter and human waste encountered? And



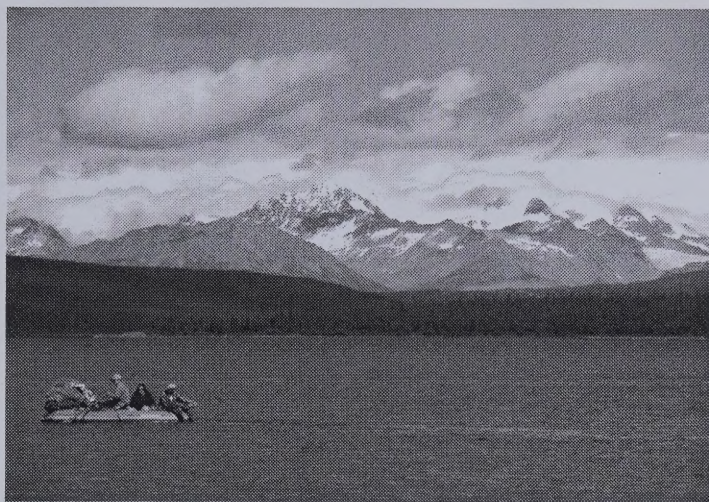
Photos by Dennis R. Green

what should be done? BLM lead recreation planner Will Runnoe used to work on the Salmon River, a popular whitewater recreation destination in Idaho. "It had some great white sand beaches that everyone loved to camp at, but by midsummer the lack of sanitation made some of these places smell so bad nobody could stay there. We don't want that to happen here," he said.

BLM reviewed its study findings and staff met with river users and local residents to help update the river management plan. In the near future, Glennallen District Manager Ramone McCoy will sign off on an Environmental Assessment for revising the 1983 plan. BLM will then turn to developing a new plan which should be completed this fall.

"Overall, the public wants to maintain current levels of activity so we will be increasing our education efforts. For 2005, we will be encouraging everyone to voluntarily carry portable toilets, pack out all waste, and use fire pans. We'll also be explaining 'Leave No Trace'

—continued on page 6



Paxson Lake is the start of a two to five-day trip down the main stem of the Gulkana National Wild River.



Canyon Rapids is not recommended for canoes, but a short portage allows a safe by-pass.

(opposite page)
Floaters prepare to launch at BLM's Paxson Lake Campground on the busy Fourth of July weekend.

Counting Kings

Mention "Copper River Reds or Kings" and mouths start watering. Coveted for their firm red fillets and fresh flavor these salmon literally fight an upstream battle against survival. Starting in the Gulf of Alaska, they must dodge commercial and sport fishing vessels, subsistence fish wheels, dip-netters and anglers before reaching tributaries of the Copper River to spawn.

With "reds" and "kings" in full demand, these differing groups are found arguing over a fair percentage of each season's catch. Pressure to sustain current harvest levels continues to mount. In an effort to establish "Biological Escapement Goals," BLM is now in the fourth year of a joint research venture with Alaska Department of Fish and Game along one of the larger and more productive tributaries to the Copper.

A counting tower sits along the main stem of the Gulkana River overlooking a white tarp stretched across the river's bottom. The tower is staffed 24 hours per day, seven days a week, 20 minutes at a



Elijah Waters

time. From June 1 until the salmon run ends near mid-August, technicians take shifts counting salmon as they cross the tarp and entering the data into a log. These tedious calculations have paid off. The data shows that the Gulkana, one of the largest tributaries of the Copper, accounts for close to 20 percent of the Copper River king population, which helps to establish important baseline data.





Growing Pains

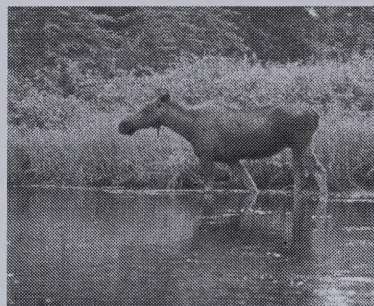
—continued from page 5

principles to decrease the proliferation of trails, campsites, and fire rings,” says Runnoe. But he anticipates this will shift to being a requirement in the future if use continues to increase. The plan also outlines other practices that may become necessary in later phases should the experience not match people’s expectations.

Managing the Gulkana River presents some unique considerations. The river and its uses change seasonally and by river segment. Rafters generally use the Upper Gulkana starting in late May through July for both fishing and floating. Motorized users tend to congregate from Sourdough Campground upstream to the West Fork confluence and downstream to the Richardson Highway bridge for salmon fishing. During August, water levels generally drop and river use subsides. However, water levels tend to rise once again with increasing rainfall in autumn making it navigable when subsistence hunting season begins and river users focus on opportunities to supply their families with food for the winter. The Gulkana River also serves as the water supply for the village of Gulkana, so potential pollution from motorized boating in the lower stretches of the river is a concern of local residents.

Whether one recreates, subsists or manages the Gulkana National Wild River, all agree ... the Gulkana is wild: wild for its primitive beauty, wild for its plentiful habitat, and wild for its mark on the hearts and minds of those who choose to experience it.

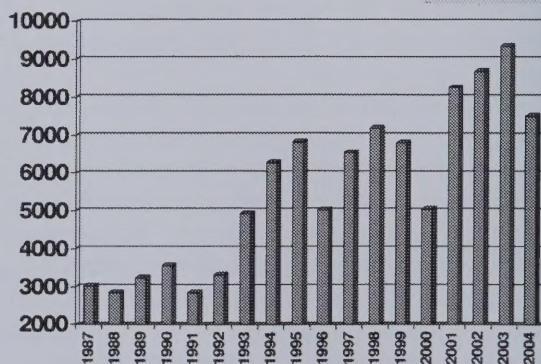
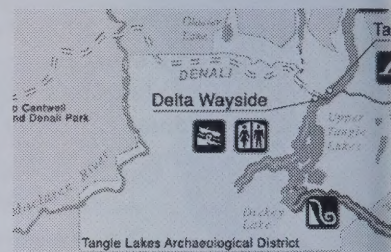
—Marnie Graham



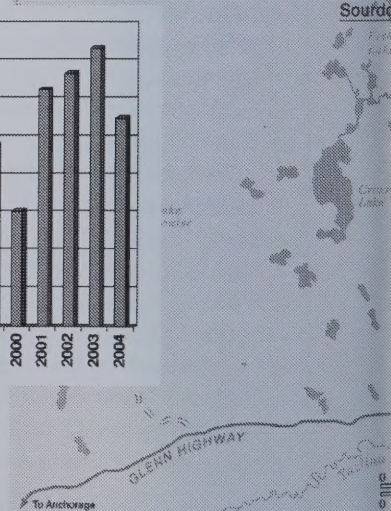
(top) Old cabin near the outlet of Paxson lake.

(above) Moose, bear and waterfowl are present all summer.

(right) The Gulkana is easily reached from both Fairbanks and Anchorage.



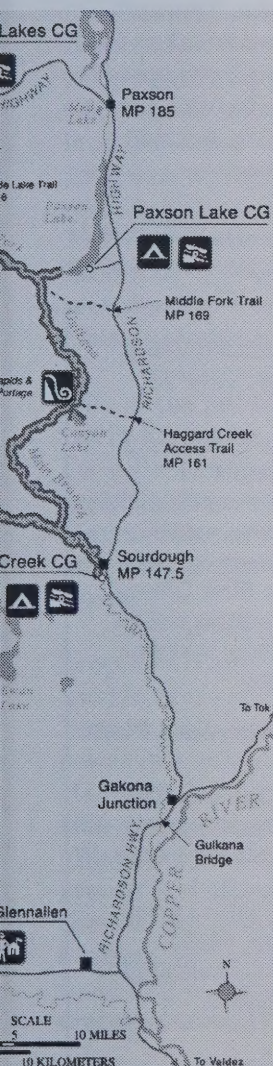
Visitor use has more than tripled since the first river management plan was completed in 1983.





James Thompson

on the Gulkana



Sourdough Campground is one of the few places in Alaska with a fully-accessible ramp giving wheelchair anglers an opportunity to catch fish.

For more information...
BLM Glennallen District Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, AK 99588
(907) 822-3217

If the BLM's website is functioning, information will also be posted at www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov. (see story p.1)



© Alissa Crandall

A bedroom — and kitchen — for the birds

Bald eagles are Alaska's largest resident bird of prey and are more abundant in Alaska than anywhere else in the United States. Bald eagle nesting surveys have been conducted along the Gulkana River for more than 20 years. BLM research has determined that nearly 100 nesting territories exist within its drainage and the birds prey heavily on spawning salmon.

"Nesting begins in April," explains BLM biologist Kari Rogers. "Usually two eggs are laid and hatch in late May or early June. The young are helpless at first and need extensive parental care and attention. Disturbances during this critical period can lead to nest abandonment and premature fledglings."

For this reason, increased human activity along the Gulkana has been of concern to biologists and river users. BLM research suggests that nesting behaviors change when human activity increases or when salmon supplies are poor. In some places along the Gulkana where salmon supplies are rich, increased human activity has shown little effect. Where salmon are sparse, however, the opposite has been true.

Other raptors found along the Gulkana include golden eagles, accipiter hawks, harrier hawks, four types of falcons, three species of buteos and five species of owls.

Trumpeter swans are a BLM sensitive species due to their federal listing as endangered in the Lower 48. Along the Gulkana, these swans seasonally return in numbers so abundant the area is the second largest breeding grounds in the state. These breeding grounds, concentrated largely south of the West Fork and west of the Mainstem, held 3,986 swans in the summer of 2000, representing 23.2 percent of the state's total population.



Fires of '04

It's harvest time



Public interest in morel mushroom harvesting in Alaska "sparked" when wildland fires in 2004 scorched more than 6.7 million acres of forested lands. Between March and May 2005, the Alaska Cooperative Extension along with other partners, hosted public morel harvesting workshops in several Interior Alaska communities including Fort Yukon, Tok and Fairbanks. Two workshops were held in Fairbanks and attendance exceeded 200 people at each event.

Morels, tasty and highly prized mushrooms, are collected for personal use and also commercially for a national and international market. Since morels have not yet been successfully cultivated, wild morels are often in high demand and can command tremendous prices when supplies are low.

Morels can occur in abundance in burned forests, generally in the first and second years following a fire, usually between late May and July, if rainfall amounts and appropriately warm temperatures occur in the right combination. In 1991, the magic mix of rainfall and temperatures occurred near Tok and produced an abundance of morel mushrooms in an area that burned in 1990. The explosion of morels created a brief but chaotic frenzy of commercial harvest interest involving local and out of state pickers and out of state buyers.

Taking note of the 1991 commercial morel mushroom harvest in Tok, and recognizing the potential demand and administrative impact that could occur across Interior Alaska this year, the BLM Fairbanks District Office and the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, developed and entered into a cooperating agreement in May 2005 which outlines how both agencies will administer

and manage mushroom harvesting on BLM and DNR administered lands in 2005.

The agreement is intended to make permitting of commercial harvest of morel mushrooms consistent between the agencies and more understandable for the public. Harvesting is expected to occur predominately in burned areas adjacent to roads.

Under the agreement, both agencies will issue permits for the commercial harvest of morel mushrooms at a fair market price of 20 cents per pound. The minimum price for a permit was established at \$50 which will allow the commercial sale of up to 250 pounds of morels.

Each agency will issue their own permits but each will recognize, and accept as valid, permits issued by the other agency. That will make it easier for commercial mushroom pickers to concentrate on mushrooms rather than land ownership, at least where BLM and DNR

managed lands are involved. The permits are not valid on other land ownerships. All permits will contain a consistent set of stipulations designed to protect lands and resources and which clearly identify commercial harvester obligations.

Under the agreement, all funds will be collected and deposited in a federal account managed by BLM and then divided between the agencies at the end of the season based on a formula.

Morel mushrooms picked for personal use and consumption will not require a permit but quantities will be limited to 10 gallons per person per day.

The State of Alaska, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and Alaska Cooperative Extension have posted or intend to post mushroom harvesting information and fire location maps on publicly-accessible websites.

—Doug Stockdale

Illustration ©Dorothy Beebe

Public comments on East Alaska Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement will be accepted through July 28.

In mid-May the BLM held seven public meetings throughout the East Alaska planning area to gather testimony on actions proposed in the plan and their potential impacts to subsistence resources and uses. More than 500 copies of the draft were distributed to interested individuals as well as organizations, native villages and councils, and local and state governments. Comments are currently being accepted via e-mail (ak_earmp@ak.blm.gov), mail (Glennallen Field Office, PO Box 147 Glennallen, AK 99588), or fax (907-822-3120). All comments will be given equal weight regardless of their method of submission. For more information, contact Bruce Rogers at (907) 822-3217 or brogers@ak.blm.gov.

Comment summary available for The Bay Resource Management Plan

BLM's Anchorage Field Office will release a scoping report for The Bay RMP in June. This report will summarize public comments received during January through March 2005. Contact project lead Patricia McClenahan to request a copy of the scoping report at (907) 267-1484 or via email at patricia_mcclenahan@ak.blm.gov. You may also request a copy by writing to the BLM Anchorage Field Office, 6881 Abbott Loop Road, Anchorage, AK 99507.

The Bay RMP planning area includes 3.6 million acres of BLM-administered lands in the Goodnews Bay and Bristol Bay areas of Southcentral Alaska.

All at your fingertips...

BLM-DNR project brings land records online to your home

For decades people have been coming to BLM offices to find out about property boundaries and easements, get land status maps and information about mining claims, and other land records data. But that may be a thing of the past, thanks to the Internet. A lot of federal, state, local and private land records are now available online at landrecords.info thanks to funding from the Alaska Cadastral Project (ACP), a partnership between the BLM and the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources. As a result, you can save time and money by getting land information at home.

Since 2002, the ACP has funneled more than \$2.5 million to 13 state, local and tribal governments and agencies to develop electronic land records that are accessible online. In addition, Skagway, Sitka, Valdez and Juneau in Southeast Alaska are on track to join the program by July and will share \$600,000 with four ongoing projects this year.

The project was initiated by the Western Governors Association to move boundary systems and other geographic information from paper-based to digitized Geographic Information System (GIS) databases. As land in Alaska has been transferred to state and local governments, they have developed their own land records databases that must be available to the public. The BLM has its land records available online and state and local governments have been digitizing their records too with funding from the ACP, which provides a major convenience to the public.

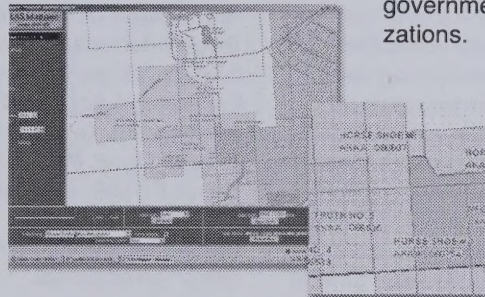
"The importance of having the land records available to the public cannot be overemphasized," says Orrin Frederick, BLM-Alaska Geographic Coordinate Data Base branch chief. "One of the foundational aspects of the American government is land tenure. Having that information available to the public is vital and having that information accessible electronically is great."

In addition to public access, the cadastral project gives community leaders a critical tool to manage livable areas and in turn, encourage economic growth. For example, planners can use the information to route sewer or electrical systems and other infrastructure. Having the information available also reduces confusion among resource developers, communities and village corporations, land managers, environmental groups and others who work with land records because they all are using the same data set. The information assists policymakers with decisions on various issues including disaster response, open space protection, transportation planning and wilderness designations.



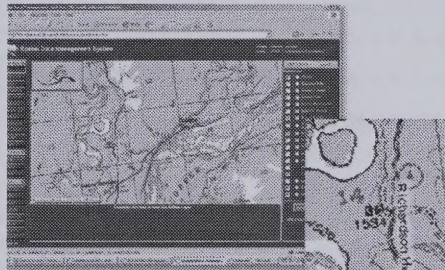
LandRecords.info screen

The landrecords.info website and many of its related systems are the product of a joint project by the BLM and the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources. It provides a common entrance to cadastral-related data systems by these agencies as well as local government and Native organizations.



Mineral Estate Map
The Mining Claims Mapper

(www.akmining.info) portrays both state and federal mining properties on a single, interactive website allowing the public and government agencies to view current and accurate mining and mineral property information like this mineral estate status map near Hope.



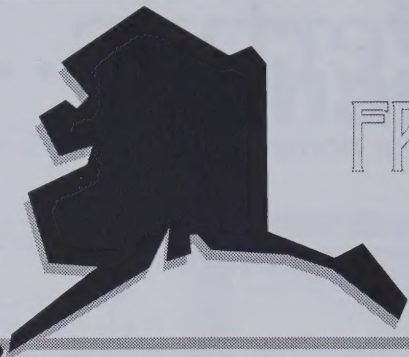
Easement Map

BLM-Alaska's Spatial Data Management System (sdms.ak.blm.gov/sdms/index.jsp) allows users to view public land records including survey information, land ownership, easements and mining claims.

Communities and agencies interested in funding from the cadastral project must submit detailed proposals. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was granted funding in 2002 and 2003 to develop an interactive GIS website (<http://www.matsugov.us/>) containing land parcel information, trails, city boundaries and roads. Other communities have used funds for surveying, converting land data, and upgrading computer systems and software in an effort to get digital land records ready to go online.

For more information about the Alaska Cadastral Project, contact Orrin Frederick, BLM-Alaska, at 907-271-5236. For technical assistance using the land records websites, please contact the agency publishing the information.

—Wendy Longtin



FRONTIER FLASHES

late breaking news from around Alaska

METLAKATLA. BLM-Alaska's Division of Energy and Solid Minerals is advising the Metlakatla Indian community on developing the Skater's Lake material site. A large gravel deposit at the site is expected to last at least four years and could provide a valuable learning experience for developing a larger, adjacent material site at Bald Ridge. The Bald Ridge aggregate deposit is internationally significant with an estimated 20 million cubic yards of material suitable for export. Both sites are on the Metlakatla Indian Reservation in southeast Alaska. BLM is responsible for approving a plan of operations and production verification. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is a cooperating agency.

STATEWIDE. BLM has awarded survey contracts valued at \$7.4 million for work this summer. Two contractors, CMJV and McClintock Land Associates, will complete approximately 500 parcels on Nelson Island for the largest project in the state. The Nelson Island area contains the largest concentration of remaining applications under the Native allotment program. CMJV will also survey a large State selection project at Kaktovik and another at Killik River/Dalton West. Surveys of native village lands will be completed at Naknek, Tanacross and Hoonah. Other surveys will be active at Iliamna, Nondalton, Newhalen, Shaktoolik, Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, Piamut, Tanacross, Ambler, Kobuk, and Shungnak.

HAINES. The Anchorage District Office is working with the community of Haines to gather public input on a proposal for helicopter operations in the area. A longtime special recreation permittee submitted a proposal to expand a guiding operation to include alpine hiking opportunities via helicopter drop-off and pickup on BLM-administered lands outside Haines. BLM is talking with community

ALEUTIAN ISLANDS. BLM issued the final land patent to the Unga Corp. on April 20. Unga is the first village in the Aleut Region to receive their Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) entitlement. (right) Unga Village Corp. President Bruce Foster, Sr. signs the final land patent issued by BLM Deputy State Director for Conveyances Ramona Chinn on April 20, 2005. Aleut Corp. President Dick Jacobsen and BLM staff share the historic moment.



Wendy Longtin

leaders and the public can comment on the proposal through June 15. BLM will consider this information in the environmental assessment being prepared and will issue a decision later this summer. For more information, contact Clinton Hanson, 907-267-1285.

PORCUPINE RIVER. On May 9, Alaska State Director Henri Bisson confirmed that the federal government has no valid interest to approximately 214 miles of the riverbed underlying navigable waters of the Porcupine River. The final decision approves the State of Alaska's application for a recordable disclaimer of interest for lands underlying the Porcupine River.

The State of Alaska applied for the bed of the Porcupine River from its mouth at the Yukon River to a point between monuments 50 and 51 on the United States-Canada International Boundary. The State also applied for lands underlying Rock Slough, Middle Channel, Henderson Slough, Joe Ward Slough, Six Mile Slough, Nine Mile Slough, and Curtis Slough, as well as lands underlying "all interconnecting sloughs between the lines

of ordinary high water" of the Porcupine River.

The decision does not approve the State's application for "interconnecting sloughs," due to insufficient evidence, or for the 60-foot wide neutral strip of land, reserved at the time of statehood, which encompasses a small portion of the Porcupine River near the International Border.

ANCHORAGE. The second phase of an aspen regeneration project is under way on BLM's Campbell Tract in Anchorage. The project is designed to improve forest health and wildlife habitat by mechanically thinning overmature and dying aspen to promote regeneration. It also will remove potential hazard trees from recreation trails.

ANCHORAGE. The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation presented its 2005 Award for Excellence to BLM's Campbell Creek Science Center at a Hands on the Land workshop in Dallas.

BLM asking public to recommend areas where ANILCA d(1) withdrawals can be lifted

No sooner did Dave Mushovic, a BLM Glennallen District Office employee, transfer to the BLM's Alaska State Office in Anchorage earlier this year, he was handed a priority assignment. He and Susan Lavin, both realty specialists with the lands branch, will prepare a report for Congress, due next year, that takes into account public land orders withdrawing millions of acres of federal land in Alaska for study and classification and consider whether these lands should be open to entry.

Besides reviewing PLOs issued by the Secretary of the Interior in the 1970s under the authority of 17 (d) (1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, they are checking the land status, reviewing resource issues and preparing maps. Typically "d-1 withdrawals" are reviewed under the BLM's land use planning process. "This is when lands are assessed for resource potential, uses and whether withdrawn lands can be lifted," says Mushovic. However, many of BLM's stakeholders have grown increasingly frustrated and want a more expeditious process. In response the Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to submit a report that recommends whether "d-1" withdrawn lands can be open to entry.

What concerns Mushovic and Lavin is that many of these withdrawn lands are selected by the State of Alaska or Native corporations and are included in other administrative or Congressional withdrawals. "We want people to know that lifting withdrawals doesn't mean the lands are automatically available to mining and leasing," says Lavin. "It's a little more complicated than that even if the withdrawals are lifted," she said. Selected lands will remain segregated until the land is conveyed or selections are relinquished. Some lands under study include national wildlife refuge, park and forest systems and conservation units which may have more restrictive or additional administrative procedures to follow before mining or leasing could occur.

BLM is ready to involve the public in this process and this month will be sending out information and soliciting comment on what withdrawals should be lifted. Ads in statewide papers will also announce a public comment period. You can review maps depicting withdrawn lands at BLM offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kotzebue, Nome and Juneau.

Mushovic cautions, "The report is advisory and no environmental analysis is required under the National Environmental Policy Act." BLM is responsible for making recommendations only on lands managed by BLM.

Questions about the process and report can be answered by Dave Mushovic at (907) 271-3293 or Susan Lavin at (907) 271-3826.

—Danielle Allen

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Energy Education Brightens Science Center

(left) A group of fifth graders from Sand Lake Elementary School spent a day learning more about energy recently at the Campbell Creek Science Center. The three-hour program rotated the students through three different stations: one to learn about forms of energy (such as mechanical, heat and potential), one to learn about sources of energy (including coal and oil), and one to learn how energy flows through ecosystems.

Hands-on activities, demonstrations and games all brought the energy concepts to life. Lead teacher Reiko Mowery commented that the students really loved all the different activities. "The hands-on material really helped the students understand energy," she said. The science center has been offering this Energy Awareness program since October 2002.

Soon the center will be expanding its energy education offerings further with a long-anticipated interactive computer-based program, "Get Energized!" Designed for a general audience (middle-school level through adult), this program will be accessible in three different forms: a kiosk housed in the science center lobby, online through the center's website, and on a CD-ROM that will be distributed throughout the state and the rest of the country. It covers everything from the pros and cons of various energy sources for electricity generation to the role of BLM in helping to meet the nation's energy demands. It also includes a special section highlighting Alaska and its energy story. So stand by for the launch of this new program — and get ready to get energized!

(right)
**Science
instructor
Alison
Lausten
awards a
prize to a
youngster
at an
Earth Day
event in
Anchorage.**



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